in exposed regions (23, 23') by a second etching process. A subsequent third etching process then etches the further silicon layer (17, 17'). In this manner, free-standing structures for sensor elements can be produced in a simple process which is completely compatible with the method steps in IC integration technology.

REMARKS

Claims 1-31 are pending in this Application. Claims 1-31 stand rejected under § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite: independent claim 1 (and thereby its dependent claims) for using "confusing" language, and claims 3, 10 and 24-25 for use of a trademark or trade name. Claims 1-2, 4-9, 13-14 and 23 stand rejected under § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,313,836 to Fujii, *et al.* ("Fujii") in view of publication "Silicon Processing for the VLSI Era," Vol. 1: Process Technology, S. Wolf and R. Tauber, Lattice Press 1986, ISBN 0-961672-3-7 ("Wolf"). Claims 3, 10 and 24 stand rejected under § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fujii and Wolf in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,211,092 to Tang, *et al.* ("Tang"). The remaining claims 11-12, 15-22 and 25-31 stand objected to as depending from rejected claims, but are denoted as allowable if rewritten to incorporate the limitations of their respective base and intervening claims. Finally, the specification and claims stand objected to for informalities and use of improper Markush language.

The Applicants have carefully reviewed the December 21, 2001 Office Action, and respectfully submit the foregoing amendments and following remarks in response thereto. The Applicants wish to express their appreciation for the Examiner's indication that claims 11-12, 15-22 and 25-31 contain allowable subject matter. For the reasons discussed below, the Applicants have amended the claims by canceling claims 1-31, without prejudice to the subject matter contained therein, and have added new claims 32-69.

The first twelve new claims, claims 32-43, are based on claim 1, and incorporate limitations from allowable claims in the following manner:

- Claim 32 combines claim 1 with allowable claim 12.
- Claim 33 combines claim 1 with claim 10 and features disclosed on page 10, lines 12-28 of the specification.

- Claim 34 combines claim 1 with features disclosed on page 13, line 18 to page 14, line 15 of the specification.
- Claim 35 combines claim 1 with claim 20.
- Claim 36 combines claim 1 with features disclosed on page 15, line 9 to page 16, line 6 of the specification.
- Claims 37 and 38, which depend from claim 36, are supported by page 15, line 32 to page 16, line 16 of the specification.
- Claim 39 combines claim 1 with claims 5 and 11.
- Claim 40 combines claim 1 with claims 5 and 15.
- Claim 41 combines claim 1 with claims 5 and 16.
- Claim 42 combines claim 1 with claim 22.
- Claim 43 combines claim 1 with claims 24 and 25.

The new dependent Claims 44 through 69 follow the patterns of the now-canceled dependent claims, with appropriately altered dependencies and, in some cases, clarified wording. In summary, the new dependent claims are composed in the following manner:

- Claim 44 is based on claim 2.
- Claim 45 is based on claim 3.
- Claim 46 is based on claim 4.
- Claim 47 is based on claim 5.
- Claim 48 is based on claim 6.
- Claim 49 is based on claim 7.
- Claim 50 is based on claim 8.
- Claim 51 is based on claim 9.
- Claim 52 is based on claim 10.
- Claim 53 is based on claim 12.
- Claim 54 is based on claim 13.
- Claim 55 is based on claim 14.
- Claim 56 is based on claim 17.
- Claim 57 is based on claim 18.
- Claim 58 is based on claim 19.
- Claim 59 is based on claim 21.

- Claim 60 is based on claim 22.
- Claim 61 is based on claim 23.
- Claim 62 is based on claim 24.
- Claim 63 is based on claim 25.
- Claim 64 is based on claim 26.
- Claim 65 is based on claim 27.
- Claim 66 is based on claim 28.
- Claim 67 is based on claim 29.
- Claim 68 is based on claim 30.
- Claim 69 is based on claim 31.

The Applicants have amended the Abstract to delete the phrase "Figure 6" from the end of the Abstract page. In regard to the Examiner's request that all instances of "Teflon" should be capitalized, the Applicants respectfully note that a substitute specification including the requested changes will be submitted once the prosecution on the merits of the claims is concluded. In accordance with the Examiner's helpful suggestions, the new claims have been written to address the Examiner's objections to improper Markush language in former claims 5, 7 and 27. Finally, as to the § 112, second paragraph rejections, the Applicants have written the new claims consistent with the Examiner's suggestions to eliminate the "Teflon-like" language and refer more clearly to $(CF_2)_n$ material.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that claims 32-69, which variously incorporate the limitations of claims previously deemed as allowable and further define patentable subject matter, are presently allowable. The Applicants therefore earnestly solicit an early and favorable action on the merits and issuance of a Notice of Allowance for claims 32-69.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney to discuss any matter concerning this application.

The Office is authorized to charge any underpayment or credit any overpayment to Kenyon & Kenyon Deposit Account No. 11-0600.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: 3/27, 2002

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MARKED-UP VERSION OF AMENDMENTS

IN THE ABSTRACT:

The Abstract has been amended as follows:

A method is proposed for etching a first silicon layer (15) that is provided with an etching mask (10) for defining lateral recesses (21). In a first plasma etching process, trenches (21') are produced in the region of the lateral recesses (21) by anisotropic etching. The first etching process comes virtually to a standstill as soon as a separating layer (12, 14, 14', 16), buried between the first silicon layer (15) and a further silicon layer (17), is reached. This separating layer is thereupon etched through in exposed regions (23, 23') by a second etching process. A subsequent third etching process then etches the further silicon layer (17, 17'). In this manner, free-standing structures for sensor elements can be produced in a simple process which is completely compatible with the method steps in IC integration technology.

[Figure 6]